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A D D R E S S
TO THE
P E O P L E
O F

England, Scotland, and Ireland,

ON THE PRESENT

Important Crisis of AFFAIRS.

B Y
CATHARINE MACAULAY.

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THE BRITISH MUSEUM

A N

ADDRESS, &c.

THE advantage of a second opportunity to correct a mistake, when the first has been neglected, is a happiness which few individuals, or bodies of men, experience; and a blessing which, if it oftener occurred in the affairs of life, would enable most of us to avoid the greater part of the misery which at present appears inseparable to the human state.

The Electors of this kingdom, however, have shewn themselves incorrigible, by re-

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cently abusing what the author of *The Patriot* justly calls a high dignity, and an important trust; and this after a ruinous experience of the effects of a former ill-placed confidence.

It is not to be supposed, that either the beauty of justice, the interests of liberty, or the welfare of individuals, as united to the common good, can have any avail with men, who, at this important crisis of British affairs, could reject the wise example set them by the city of London, in requiring a test from those they elected into the representative office; a test which, had it been generally taken, and religiously observed, would have dispersed the dark cloud which hangs over the empire, restored the former splendor of the nation, and given a renewed strength, vigour, and purity, to the British constitution.

Among the body of Electors, however, there are undoubtedly many who, by the most
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eruel of undue influences,—that influence which the opulent exert over the needy, have in a manner been constrained to act contrary to judgment and inclination; while there are others who have been misled by their ignorance, and the sophistry of men of better understanding.—To these, and that large body of my countrymen who are unjustly debarred the privilege of election, and, except by petition and remonstrance, have no legal means of opposing the measures of government, I address myself on the present momentous occasion.

It can be no secret to you, my friends and fellow citizens, that the ministry, after having exhausted all those ample sources of corruption which your own tameness under oppressive taxes have afforded, either fearing the unbiaſſed judgment of the people, or impatient at the slow, but steady progress of despotism, have attempted to wrest from our American Colonists every privilege necessary to freemen;—privileges which they hold
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from the authority of their charters, and the principles of the constitution.

With an entire supineness, England, Scotland, and Ireland, have seen the Americans, year by year, stripped of the most valuable of their rights ; and, to the eternal shame of this country, the stamp act, by which they were to be taxed in an arbitrary manner, met with no opposition, except from those who are particularly concerned, that the commercial intercourse between Great-Britain and her Colonies should meet with no interruption.

With the same guilty acquiescence, my countrymen, you have seen the last Parliament finish their venal course, with passing two acts for shutting up the Port of Boston, for indemnifying the murderers of the inhabitants of Massachusetts-Bay, and changing their chartered constitution of government. And to shew that none of the fundamental principles of our boasted constitution are held sacred

sacred by the government or the people, the same Parliament, without any interruption either by petition or remonstrance, passed another act for changing the government of Quebec ; in which the Popish religion, instead of being tolerated as stipulated by the treaty of peace, is established ; in which the Canadians are deprived of the right to an assembly, and of trial by jury ; in which the English laws in civil cases are abolished, the French laws established, and the crown empowered to erect arbitrary courts of judicature ; and in which, for the purpose of enlarging the bounds where despotism is to have its full sway, the limits of that province are extended so as to comprehend those vast regions that lie adjoining to the northerly and westerly bounds of our colonies.

The anxious desire of preserving that harmony which had so long and so happily existed between the Parent State and her Colonies, occasioned the Americans to bear, with

with an almost blameable patience, the innovations which were continually made on their liberty, 'till the ministry, who imagined their moderation proceeded from ignorance and cowardice, by depriving them of almost every part of their rights which remained unviolated, have raised a spirit beyond the Atlantic, which may either recover the opportunities we have lost of restoring the breaches which for near a century have been making in our constitution, or of sinking us into the lowest abyss of national misery.

In these times of general discontent, when almost every act of our Governors excites a jealousy and apprehension in all those who make the interests of the community their care, there are several amongst us who, dazzled with the sun-shine of a court, or fattening on the spoils of the people, have used their utmost endeavours to darken your understandings on those subjects, which, at
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this time, it is particularly your business to be acquainted with. There are others who, whilst they have the words Freedom, Constitution, and Privilege, continually in their mouths, are using every mean in their power to render those limitations useless, which have from time to time been erected by our ancestors, as mitigations of that barbarous system of despotism imposed by the Norman tyrant on the inhabitants of this island.

These men attempt to persuade you, that those who appear the most anxious for the safety of their country are the least interested in its welfare. They have had the insolence to tell you, though in contradiction to the evidence of your feelings, that all goes well, that your Governors faithfully fulfil the duties of their office, and that there are no grievances worthy to be complained of but those which arise from that spirit of faction which, more or less, must ever exist in a limited monarchy.—These men have told you,

you, that you are no judges of the state of your political happiness; that you are made of too inflammable materials to be trusted with the knowledge of your injuries, even if you have suffered any; and that those who appeal to you, do it only with the intention to betray you.—They have told you that Quebec, being on the other side of the Atlantic, it is of little consequence to you what religion is there established; that the Canada bill only secures to the inhabitants of that province privileges which were stipulated to them on the yielding the place to the English; and that those are as bad as Papists, who refuse to any people the enjoyment of their religion.

These men, my fellow citizens, have attempted to divert you from the exacting a test as the rule of parliamentary conduct, and to bring into suspicion those who have been willing to enter into salutary engagements: They have told you, that such candidates, by promising more than they were able to perform,

perform, only meant to delude you by an empty clamour of ineffectual zeal.—These men, in asserting that you are too profligate, too needy, and too ignorant to be adequate judges of your own business, endeavour to throw disgrace and contempt on those who have made an indefinite promise of obeying the mandates of their constituents.

These men have asserted, that unlimited obedience is stipulated in the acceptance of protection; and though such an assertion involves you and the subjects of every state in unlimited slavery, and unlimited slavery excludes every idea of right and power, yet they have also told you, that it is in vindication of your authority that your Governors have exerted an arbitrary power over your brethren in America.

In order to confound your ideas on the merits of the dispute, and to stifle your feelings of humanity, they have told you, that
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the Americans, though neither adequately or inadequately represented in the case of taxation, stand on the same predicament with yourselves, and that there is no more injustice in inflicting a severe punishment on the whole town of Boston, for the supposed offence of a few of its inhabitants, than in the bombarding a town in the possession of an enemy, when, by such an act of hostility, a few of our own people dwelling in the town might accidentally be destroyed.

This, my friends and fellow citizens, is treating you, indeed, according to the appellations of ignorant and profligate, so freely given you; but as there are many of you who, I trust, deserve not these severe terms of reproach, I shall appeal to that measure of understanding which the Almighty has given in common to man, and endeavour to convince you of the falshood of these assertions.

Men who are rid of the numerous ills which narrow circumstances occasion, and
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this by pensions taken from the public treasure, may, from a selfishness inseparable to human nature, fancy that the times cannot be better; but that this is the mere delusion of those who rejoice at your expence, your own experience must, I think, fully shew you. Let the once-opulent trader, let the starving mechanic, bear witness to this truth, that our commerce has been declining with hasty steps for these last ten years:—Let the numerous half-famished poor which we meet at every turn in our streets; let the needy gentry, whose honest independent ancestors have handed down to them a moderate income, and who find that income yearly sinking from bare sufficiency to poverty, bear witness, that the high price of all the necessaries of life, with the oppressive burden of our taxes, are very weighty evils.

Though men of true virtue, my fellow citizens, (that is, men who have a just regard for the rights of nature, for the general happiness

happiness of the human species, and for the happiness of their countrymen in particular) will not willingly associate with those of looser principles, yet they will undoubtedly endeavour to stop the career of that government, whose impolitic measures are every day adding numbers to the wretched mass of the ignorant, the needy, and the profligate.

To oppose government with success, such honest individuals must make use of the assistance of the multitude, and consequently, of good and bad citizens, of the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, of the wise and the foolish, that is, of every man who will co-operate with them in their designs, whether he be led to such co-operation by the principle of justice, by interest, or by passion.

Though Quebec is situated beyond the Atlantic, my fellow citizens, you are still to remember that it is part of the British empire; and that, though a toleration of all religions, where such indulgence can be used
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with safety to the welfare of the community, is undoubtedly laudable, because agreeable to the principles of justice and the rights of nature, yet the establishment of Popery, which is a very different thing from the toleration of it, is, for very just and wise reasons, altogether incompatible with the fundamental principles of our constitution.

I will, however, wave a subject which must ever be an invidious one while there are so many of us in communion with the Roman church, and which is perhaps impertinent, because it carries with it the appearance of a remote danger, while so many nearer mischiefs demand our present and our earnest attention.

It is of not the establishment of the Popish religion in Quebec, even to the exclusion of a toleration to the Protestants except by favour of the crown, and this at a time when the test, and other arbitrary acts restraining the rights of conscience, hang over the heads of our own Dissenters, that we now complain.

complain.—Our present objection is not to that which the Canadians enjoy, but to that of which they are deprived.—It is not the preservation, but the violation of the Royal Word, which stands the foremost in our list of grievances.

In the act for the government of the province of Quebec, my friends and fellow citizens, we read despotism in every line.—The poor Canadians, instead of being put in possession of all the privileges and immunities of English subjects, according to his Majesty's proclamation in 1763, are indeed favoured with the full possession of their religion as long as his Majesty, who is at the head of their church, is graciously inclined to continue to them such indulgence; yet in respect both to their civil and religious rights, they are in a more abject state of slavery than when they were under the French government.

The conquests of foreign nations are dangerous triumphs, even to the liberty of republican

publican states ; but in limited monarchies, when on the conquered are imposed laws, opposite and hostile to the limitations of power in these governments, it never fails of subjecting the conquerors to the same measure of slavery which they have imposed on the conquered.

Had the government of Charles the Fifth, my fellow citizens, been confined to the sovereignty of Spain, the Spaniards might to this day have preserved a greater degree of freedom than any other of the European nations.

It was the Canada bill, and other transactions of the government, which equally threatened your security and welfare ; that engaged the city of London to exact from those they elected into the representative office an engagement, by which their members were bound to endeavour, to the utmost of their abilities, the repeal of the unconstitutional laws which passed in the last session

of the last parliament respecting America. And as septennial parliaments are found to be the root from whence all our political grievances spring, they were also bound to endeavour the restoration of our ancient privileges in respect to the duration of parliaments.

Surely, my friends and fellow citizens, this is a conduct which, at such a crisis of our affairs, was laudable and necessary; and a conduct which, if all the electors of Great-Britain had followed, we should not now have been at the eve of a civil war with America; nor such an interruption given to our commerce, as threatens the immediate ruin of thousands of families.

Surely, my friends and fellow citizens, in such a state of our affairs, no honest and enlightened man could have refused binding himself to such endeavours; and though the obeying every mandate of constituents may,
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in some very extraordinary conjuncture of opinions and circumstances, be wrong, yet at a time when the representatives had affected an entire independency, or rather an absolute sovereignty, over their constituents, this might be a sufficient reason for many worthy men, as a far lesser evil, to submit to an indefinite obligation of obedience.

Power is regarded by all men as the greatest of temporal advantages. The support given to Power, therefore, is an obligation; and, consequently, the protection given by governors to subjects, a positive duty. The subject can only be bound to obedience on the considerations of public good; but the Sovereign, on these considerations, and a thousand others equally binding, is tied to the exact observance of the laws of that constitution under which he holds his power.

The assertion that “the Americans, tho’
 “neither adequately or inadequately repre-
 C 2 “sented;

“ sented, stand on the same predicament
 “ with yourselves,” is too glaring a falshood
 to deceive you ; and I shall not affront your
 understanding so much as to fancy you can
 suppose that the positive punishment of the
 whole town of Boston for the offence of a
 few individuals, when those individuals might
 have been prosecuted according to law, can
 be a case similar to the running the hazard
 of hurting a few citizens in the attempt of
 re-taking one of our own towns from the
 enemy.

I have hitherto, my friends and fellow ci-
 tizens, endeavoured to prevent your being
 misled by the sophistry of those who have
 an interest in deceiving you. I shall now
 give you some of the judicious observations
 of one of your best friends, in regard to the
 conduct of your government towards Ame-
 rica.—

“ Before the taxing of the unrepresented
 “ colonies of America was thought of, (says
 “ Mr.

“ Mr. Burgh*) the Ministry ought to have
 “ reduced exorbitant salaries, abated or abo-
 “ lished excessive perquisites, annihilated use-
 “ less places, stopped iniquitous pensions,
 “ with-held electioneering expences, and
 “ bribes for votes in the House, reduced
 “ an odious and devouring army, and taxed
 “ vice, luxury, gaming, and public diver-
 “ sions:—This would have brought into
 “ the treasury ten times more than could
 “ have ever been expected from taxing, by
 “ force and authority, the unrepresented
 “ Colonies.

“ Even a conquered city has time given
 “ it to raise the contributions laid upon it,
 “ and may raise it in its own way. We
 “ have treated our Colonies worse than con-
 “ quered countries. Neither Wales nor
 “ Ireland are taxed unheard and unrep-
 “ sented in the British Parliament, as the
 C 3 “ Colonies :

* Political Disquisitions, page 313, et seq.

“ Colonies :—Wales sends members to
 “ parliament, and Ireland has done so ; and
 “ as Ireland is not now represented in the
 “ British Parliament, neither is it taxed in
 “ the British Parliament.

“ It is frivolous to alledge, that because
 “ the Mother Country has been at expences
 “ for the Colonies, therefore the British Par-
 “ liament may tax them, without allowing
 “ them any legal opportunity of remonstra-
 “ ting against the oppression. The Mother
 “ Country has spent her blood and her trea-
 “ sure in supporting, at different times,
 “ France against Spain, and Spain against
 “ France, Prussia against Hungary, and
 “ Hungary against Prussia, and so on with-
 “ out end. Does this give our Parliament
 “ a right to tax all Europe ?

“ What difference is there between the
 “ British Parliament’s taxing America, and
 “ and the French Court’s laying England
 “ under

“ under contribution ?—The French Court
 “ could but do this if they had conquered
 “ England.—Have we conquered our
 “ Colonies ?”

This excellent Author shews how the Americans, if there had been a necessity for such a measure, might have been taxed by our Parliament, without violating the right of representation; but, with the Bishop of St. Asaph, who speaks on this subject in a manner which must convince every man whose prejudices are only founded in ignorance, he is of opinion, that the most beneficial way of taxing the Colonies is the obliging them to an exclusive commerce with us.

To all the restrictions laid on their trade, the Americans declare they will ever readily submit; and this on the generous consideration that they are supposed to be for the benefit and advantage of the whole empire.

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At the same time, my friends and fellow citizens, the Americans declare, that if you will not concur with your own, and their enemies, to oppress them,—that is, if you will not concur with men whose every act of administration are so many evidences of a formed design to enslave the whole empire, they will ever esteem an union with you their glory and their happiness.

That they will be ever ready to contribute all in their power towards the welfare of the empire; and that they will consider your enemies as their enemies, and hold your interests as dear to them as their own.

They exhort you, my friends and fellow citizens, for the sake of that honour and justice for which this nation was once renowned,—they entreat you by all those ties of common interest which are inseparable to the subjects of free states, not to suffer your enemies to effect your slavery in their ruin.

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They set before you in the strongest colours all those disadvantages which must attend that large independent power the sovereigns of Great-Britain will gain by the means of taxing, in an arbitrary manner, the Americans;—and they invite you, for these cogent reasons, to join with them in every legal method to disappoint the designs of our common foes.

It is not impossible, my fellow citizens, that after having tamely suffered the government, by a yearly increase of taxes, to beggar yourselves and your posterity, you may be led away with the wicked, but delusive hope, that the Ministry, when they have the power to pick the pockets of your American brethren, will have the moderation to save those of their countrymen.

If these are your thoughts, my fellow citizens, little have you studied your own natures, and the experience of all ages, which
must

must have convinced you, that the want of power is the only limitation to the exertion of human selfishness; but should you be contented to bid defiance to the warnings of common policy,—should you be contented to be slaves on the hope that the Americans will bear the greater part of the burden of your enormous taxes,—be assured, that such an alternative will never be in your power:—No;—if a civil war commences between Great-Britain and her Colonies, either the Mother Country, by one great exertion, may ruin both herself and America, or the Americans, by a lingering contest, will gain an independency; and in this case, all those advantages which you for some time have enjoyed by your Colonies, and advantages which have hitherto preserved you from a national bankruptcy, must for ever have an end; and whilst a new, a flourishing, and an extensive empire of freemen is established on the other side the Atlantic, you, with the loss of all those blessings you have received

by

by the unrivalled state of your commerce, will be left to the bare possession of your foggy islands ; and this under the sway of a domestic despot, or you will become the provinces of some powerful European state.

If a long succession of abused prosperity should, my friends and fellow citizens, have entirely deprived you of that virtue, the renown of which makes you even at this day respectable among all the nations of the civilized world ;—if neither the principles of justice or generosity have any weight with you, let me conjure you to take into consideration the interests of your safety and preservation :—Suffer me again to remind you of the imminent danger of your situation :—Your Ministers, by attacking the rights of all America, have effected that which the malicious policy of more judicious mind would have avoided. Your colonists, convinced that their safety depends on their harmony, are now united in one strong bond
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of union; nor will it be in the power of a Machiavel to take any advantage of those feuds and jealousies which formerly subsisted among them, and which exposed their liberties to more real danger than all the fleets and armies we are able to send against them. Your Ministers also, deceived by present appearances, vainly imagine, because our rivals in Europe are encouraging us to engage beyond the possibility of a retreat, that they will reject the opportunity when it offers of putting a final end to the greatness and the glory of our empire; but if, by the imprudent measures of the government, the public expences increase, or the public income decrease to such a degree that the public revenue fail, and you be rendered unable to pay the interest of your debt, then will no longer be delayed the day and the hour of your destruction;—then will you become an easy prey to the courts of France and Spain, who, you may depend upon it, will fall upon you as soon as they see you fairly engaged

engaged in a war with your Colonists; and, according to what is foretold you in a late publication, that conjuncture will prove the latest and the uttermost of your prosperity, your peace, and, in all probability, of your existence, as an independent state and nation.

Rouse, my countrymen! rouse from that state of guilty dissipation in which you have too long remained, and in which, if you longer continue, you are lost for ever. Rouse! and unite in one general effort; 'till, by your unanimous and repeated Addresses to the Throne, and to both Houses of Parliament, you draw the attention of every part of the government to their own interests, and to the dangerous state of the British empire.

F I N I S.



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